

# DOPE BAG

Dope Bag is compiled by Staff and Contributing Editors: David Andrews, Hugh C. Birnbaum, Bruce N. Canfield, Russ Carpenter, O. Reid Coffield, William C. Davis, Jr., Pete Dickey, Charles Fagg, Robert W. Hunnicutt, Mark A. Keefe, IV, Angus Laidlaw, Scott E. Mayer, Charles E. Petty, Robert B. Pomeranz, O.D., Charles R. Suydam and A.W.F. Taylerson.

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## LLAMA MAX-1 PISTOL

**W**HEN the Clinton Administration banned gun and ammunition imports from China, that action presumably pleased at least two groups. The first was made up of Korean War veterans and others who disapproved of trade with China in general because of its murderous past and repressive present. Manufacturers and importers who had to meet rock-bottom Chinese prices made up the other.

The Norinco "Model of the 1911A1" established a whole new pricing structure for .45 automatics, driving U.S. makers like Auto-Ordnance, Springfield, Inc., and, at last, even Colt to offer basic M1911-style pistols at popular prices.

### LLAMA MAX-1

**MANUFACTURER:** Llama Gabilondo & Cia., Portal de Gamarra 50, 01013 Vitoria Alava, Spain  
**IMPORTER:** SGS Importers Int'l, Inc., Dept. AR, 1750 Brielle Ave., Unit B1, Wanamassa, NJ 07712  
**MECHANISM TYPE:** recoil-operated semi-automatic pistol  
**CALIBER:** .45 ACP (tested), 9 mm Parabellum  
**OVERALL LENGTH:** 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ "  
**BARREL LENGTH:** 5"  
**WEIGHT:** 41 ozs.  
**WIDTH:** 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  
**HEIGHT:** 5 $\frac{5}{16}$ "  
**MAGAZINE CAPACITY:** 7  
**TRIGGER:** single-action, 5 lbs. pull  
**SIGHTS:** three-dot with drift-adjustable rear  
**ACCESSORIES:** plastic carrying case  
**PRICE:** \$349.95

Just when you might have thought the price pressure was off, a new economy .45 has appeared to keep everyone honest.

Spanish maker Llama has offered M1911-style pistols for years, but though they were cheap, they were always just different enough that they didn't quite fit the mold. A new importer, SGS Importers, Int'l, Inc., has specified changes that make Llama's new MAX-1 much closer to what



Llama's new MAX-1 more closely resembles other M1911 derivatives than previous Llama .45s, and includes popular features that should increase acceptance.

the U.S. shooter expects in a .45. And the cost has been held to a level that makes the new gun a price leader.

The most noticeable change from previous Llamas is in the slide. Earlier guns like the IX-C (October 1994, p. 58) had a small rib running along the top, and the slide's sidewalls ran parallel all the way to the muzzle, missing the scallop at the front that characterizes the M1911.

The MAX-1's slide is much more

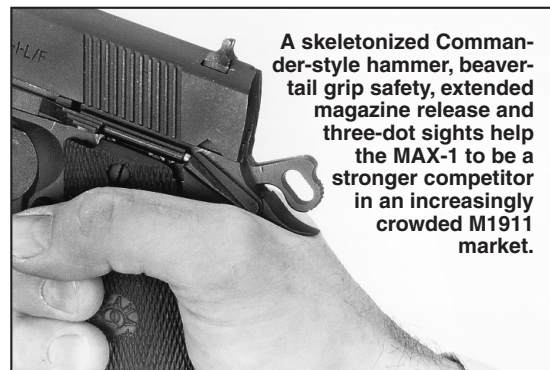
M1911-like, though it retains the High Power-style pivoting extractor in place of the long M1911 style.

The ejection port is still small in comparison with a lot of other .45s. The three-dot sights are a narrow front blade and a rear drift-adjustable for windage, though our sample's was firmly staked.

In place of the Colt Series 80 firing pin system is the much earlier but equally effective Swartz system (January 1976, p. 30). This was used on about 3,000 Colt Government Models made just before World War II.

It uses a rod passing upward through the right rear of the frame to press up a plunger in the slide that, in its normal position, prevents the firing pin from moving forward.

Squeezing the grip safety lever extends this firing pin safety actuator, allowing firing.



A skeletonized Commander-style hammer, beaver-tail grip safety, extended magazine release and three-dot sights help the MAX-1 to be a stronger competitor in an increasingly crowded M1911 market.

Should the pistol be dropped, the actuator will snap back into the frame, permitting the firing pin safety once again to prevent firing. The device is retained by the sear pin and has no effect on trigger pull.

As in previous Llama .45s, the slide stop/safety plunger tube is screwed to the left side of the pistol's frame rather than staked. This, and the non-standard spacing of the grip screws, means that aftermarket



The MAX-1 was fired for accuracy with results shown in the accompanying table, and function-fired with Black Hills, CCI, Remington and Samson ammunition. There were no failures of any kind.

Sometimes the best surprise is no surprise, and the Llama provided none, except perhaps a trigger that was quite crisp and usable. The beavertail grip safety and rowel



**Hammer bite was a problem with earlier Llamas we've examined here. The new grip safety, however, effectively protected the web of the hand. We didn't care for its sharp upper edge when decocking.**

The spur hammer is replaced with a skeletonized Commander-style unit. Just to add a bit more protection to the web of the hand, the standard grip safety has been replaced by a beavertail.

There is no modification to the frame, so this grip safety does nothing to raise the grip, as would be the case with one from Ed Brown or one of the other specialist suppliers, but it does protect the hand. Our only objection to it was that its top edge is quite sharp, and tended to scrape the thumb when the pistol was decocked.

The slide stop is an extended model that makes it easy to release the slide while maintaining a normal grip. It is narrow enough not to add much, if any, width to the pistol.

## ACCURACY RESULTS

.45 ACP Cartridge	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)
Black Hills 230-gr. JHP	916 Avg. 48 Sd	2.86	4.57	3.53
CCI No. 3568 200-gr. JHP	960 Avg. 9 Sd	2.33	4.03	3.02
Rem. No. R45AP6 185-gr. JHP	1076 Avg. 44 Sd	2.55	3.94	3.18
Average Extreme Spread				3.25
Five consecutive 5-shot groups at 25 yds. fired from Ransom Rest. Abbreviations: Sd (standard deviation), JHP (jacketed hollow-point), Rem. (Remington)				

M1911 grips won't fit without modification.

The supplied grips are the same soft rubber units we found so bulbous when mounted on the IX-C. In this application, however, they should be comfortable for all but the very short-fingered.

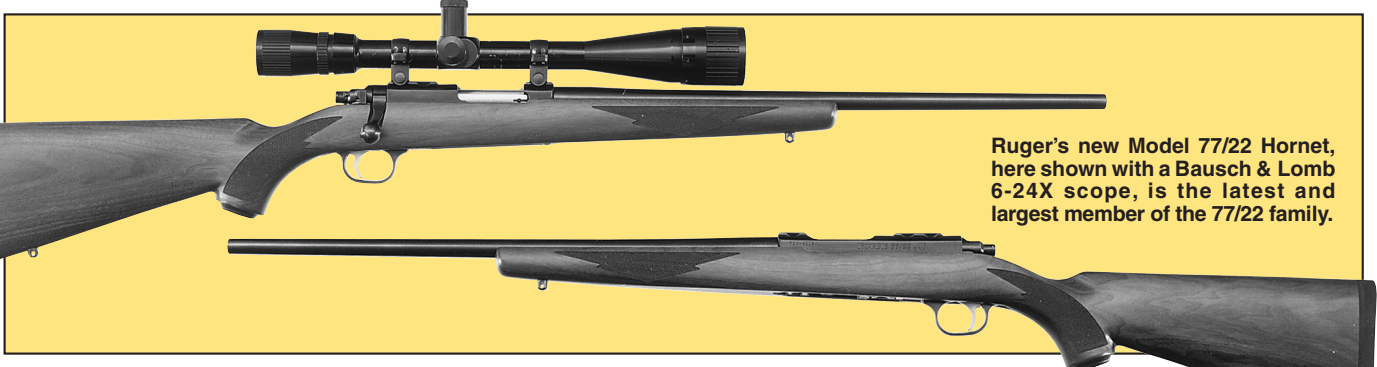
Our biggest complaint against the IX-C was its very annoying and painful hammer bite. Llama has dealt with this in two ways.

hammer completely cured the hammer bite problem we've had with previous guns.

The MAX-1 represents a big step toward making the Llama iteration of the M1911 more than just a footnote. A bit more effort to make it accept standard accessories and popular aftermarket replacement parts would put it quite on a plane with the other clones, and its good value for a very low price would make it an especially attractive choice.

NRB

## RUGER M77/22 HORNET RIFLE



Ruger's new Model 77/22 Hornet, here shown with a Bausch & Lomb 6-24X scope, is the latest and largest member of the 77/22 family.

**R**UGER'S .22 Long Rifle M77/22 Sporter (March 1984, p. 56) has proven a successful adult .22 and is now a mainstay of the firm's line. A stainless and synthetic version, the 77/22 RSP (February 1989, p. 57), was followed by the .22 WMRF-chambered

77/22 Magnum (July 1990, p. 63), aimed at small game hunters after a bit more power than that offered by the Long Rifle. A stainless and laminate stock version of the 77/22 Magnum is also now offered.

Recent years have seen a resurgence in

the popularity of the .22 Hornet cartridge, thanks to its accuracy, light report, mild recoil and handloading economy. Ruger's new 77/22 Hornet is an adaption of its popular rimfire to a center-fire caliber.



Unlike the .22 WMRF version that differed from the .22 LR only in its barrel, bolt, breechblock and trigger guard assembly, a number of changes have been made to adapt the 77/22 to center-fire. The non-rotating breechblock measures 2.55," about 1/2" longer than that of the .22 WMRF, and has only one hook extractor on the right side as opposed to two at three and nine o'clock on the rimfires. The firing pin, obviously, is longer and placed in the center of the recessed bolt face. The slot on the bottom

## RUGER M77/22

**MANUFACTURER:** Sturm, Ruger & Co., Dept. AR, Lacey Place, Southport, CT 06490

**MECHANISM TYPE:** bolt-action rifle

**CALIBER:** .22 Hornet

**OVERALL LENGTH:** 39<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"

**BARREL LENGTH:** 20"

**WEIGHT:** 5 lbs, 12 ozs.

**MAGAZINE CAPACITY:** 6

**TRIGGER:** single-stage, 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> lbs. pull

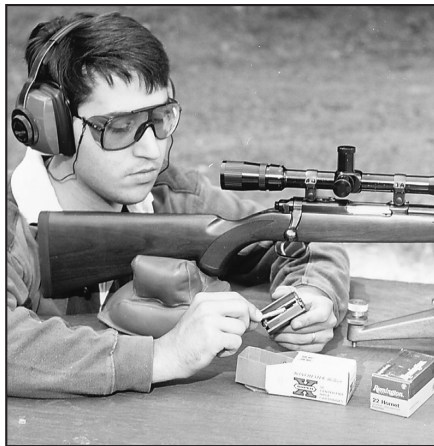
**STOCK:** American walnut: length of pull, 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"; drop at heel, 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"; drop at comb, 1"

**ACCESSORIES:** scope rings

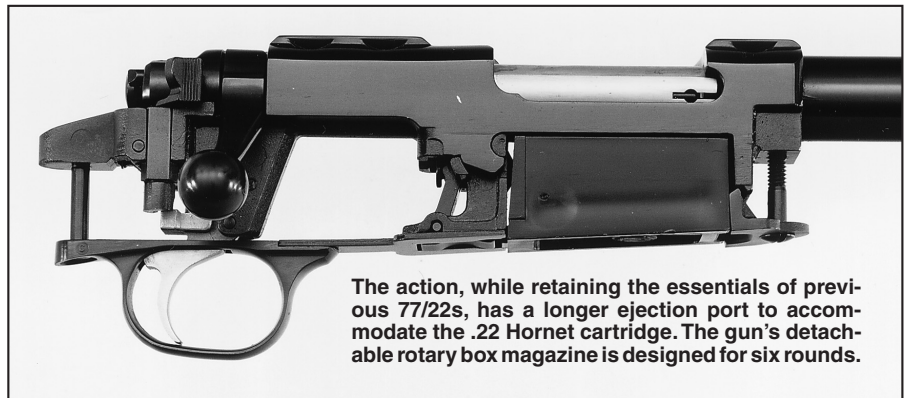
**PRICE:** \$452

of the block is necessarily wider to accommodate the .22 Hornet's beefier ejector that is integral with the trigger guard assembly.

The bolt stop, found on the left rear wall of the receiver on other 77/22s, is on the tang behind the left rear of the receiver below a cut made to accommodate it on the bottom left of the cocking piece. Not referred to at all in the composite 77/22, 77/22 Magnum and 77/22 Hornet instruction booklet, it falls out of engagement with the left locking lug



The rotary magazine has been a feature of Ruger rimfires since the 10/22 autoloader, and has been retained in the new .22 Hornet. It offers more capacity at some cost in width.



The action, while retaining the essentials of previous 77/22s, has a longer ejection port to accommodate the .22 Hornet cartridge. The gun's detachable rotary box magazine is designed for six rounds.

when depressed, allowing bolt removal to the rear.

The sample rifle's stock was of an attractive dark brown American walnut with checkering at 18 lines per inch in a bordered point pattern on the grip and fore-end.

The fore-end is necessarily wider to



The .22 Hornet, so popular in the 1930s and '40s, has regained some favor as Eastern varmint shooting has had to adapt to the suburbanization of once rural hunting land.

accommodate the larger and longer .22 Hornet magazine forward of the trigger guard and gives the underside of the rifle a long, flat profile. A black grip cap, black rubber recoil pad and quick-detachable sling swivel studs complete the stock.

Shooters have a choice between no sights and Ruger's 1" scope rings or a brass front bead with an adjustable open rear sight.

The three-position safety is modeled on the Winchester Model 70's. In its rearmost position it engages a slot in the right side of

the cocking piece. This prevents its forward movement and blocks the sear and trigger. When placed at 90° to the bore line, the bolt may be manipulated, but the trigger and sear are immobilized. Sliding it all the way forward disengages the safety.

Depressing the release at the rear of the magazine well allows the flush-mounted magazine to drop out of the stock. The magazine well has been lengthened for the 2.37" long, six-shot rotary magazine.

Field-stripping follows that of other 77/22 rifles; ensure that the rifle is unloaded by removing the magazine, opening the bolt and pulling it fully rearward. Depress the bolt release and withdraw the bolt from the receiver body.

While grasping the bolt body with the bolt face pointing away from you, rotate the bolt sleeve clockwise. Next, turn the breechblock until the breechblock retaining pin is lined up with the hole in the bolt body. Drive the retaining pin out from the opposite side; this allows the breechblock assembly to be lifted off to the front. After inserting a small punch or nail at least 2" in length into the "disassembly hole" on the bottom of the cocking piece, the bolt sleeve may be then turned out using the punch as a lever. The firing pin is then free to be lifted up and off

## ACCURACY RESULTS

.22 Hornet Cartridge	Vel. @15' (f.p.s.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)
Rem. No. R22HN2 45-gr. HP	2524 Avg. 13 Sd	0.90	1.70	1.25
Rem. No. R22HN1 45-gr. PSP	2774 Avg. 10 Sd	1.89	3.02	2.24
Win. No. 88UH62 45-gr. SP	2602 Avg. 6 Sd	1.12	2.11	1.56
Average Extreme Spread				1.69
Five consecutive 5-shot groups at 100 yds. fired from sandbags. Abbreviations: Sd (standard deviation), HP (hollow-point), SP (soft-point), PSP (pointed soft-point), Rem. (Remington), Win. (Winchester)				

the bolt sleeve assembly. No further disassembly is required for routine maintenance and cleaning and is not recommended by the manufacturer. Reassembly is in reverse order.

The 77/22 .22 Hornet, fitted with a Redfield 10X scope and Ruger's supplied rings, was function-fired with Remington and Winchester ammunition and fired for accuracy with the results shown in the accompanying table. There was one failure to extract with the Remington soft-points.

Though it definitely preferred the

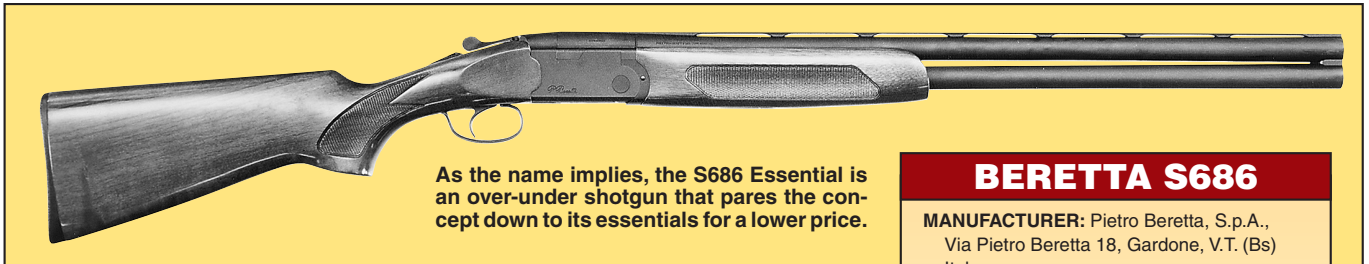


Winchester soft-points and Remington hollow-points to the Remington soft-points, our sample M77/22 Hornet proved to have more than acceptable accuracy for most varmint and small game hunting applications. Those looking for a bit more power than is offered by the .22 LR and .22 WMRF cal. will want to take a hard look at Ruger's new center-fire M77/22.



**Depress the very small bolt stop at the left rear of the receiver to remove the Model 77/22 Hornet's bolt for cleaning. The bolt will ride over the stop when it is later reinserted.**

## BERETTA S686 ESSENTIAL



As the name implies, the S686 Essential is an over-under shotgun that pares the concept down to its essentials for a lower price.

### BERETTA S686

**MANUFACTURER:** Pietro Beretta, S.p.A., Via Pietro Beretta 18, Gardone, V.T. (Bs) Italy  
**IMPORTER:** Beretta USA Corp., Dept. AR, 17601 Beretta Dr., Accokeek, MD 20607  
**MECHANISM TYPE:** over-under shotgun  
**GAUGE:** 12, 3"  
**OVERALL LENGTH:** 43¾"  
**BARREL LENGTH:** 26" (tested), 28"  
**WEIGHT:** 6¾ lbs.  
**TRIGGER:** single selective; 5 lbs. pull lower barrel, 5½ lbs. upper.  
**STOCK:** American walnut: length of pull, 14½"; drop at heel, 2¼"; drop at comb, 1½"  
**ACCESSORIES:** choke tubes, spanner  
**PRICE:** \$1,215

**T**HERE are those who feel engraving and ornamentation on a field shotgun are a waste of time and money. Whether you agree with that sentiment or not, less decoration often helps keep the price down. Beretta's new S686 Essential offers the tried and true features of the Onyx 686 over-under line at a price far below that of the company's higher-grade guns.

There is no gold-plating or inlay to be found on the S686's matte black exterior metal parts. The only ornamentation is the

engraved "P.Beretta" on both sides of the frame, Beretta's engraved logo on the bottom and "S686 ESSENTIAL" in red below the logo.

The straight-grained American walnut stock is checkered in a bordered point pattern at 22 lines per inch on the grip and either side of the fore-end. The tight checkering is well executed with few overruns. There is no grip cap, and the buttplate is of black plastic, radiused at the heel for easier mounting.

A crosshatched, untapered .242" vent rib runs the length of the matte barrels. A single .117" cylindrical white metal bead sits atop the rib 1/4" back from the muzzle. The barrels have no side ribs and are joined only at the monobloc and at the muzzle, presumably to reduce both the Essential's cost and weight.

Like that of its 686 predecessors, the safety button, located on the tang behind the top lever, also serves as the housing for the selector lever. Sliding it to the right exposes two red dots and fires the upper barrel first; moving it to the left selects the lower barrel as the first to fire and reveals a single red dot. An inertia block between the two coil hammer springs helps to prevent doubling caused by an inadvertent double pull of the trigger.

A pair of levers in the fore-end press rearward on cylindrical rods that pass through

the bottom of the action body to cock the hammers. The rods then depress bell cranks as the barrels are lowered, and the cranks press up on the hammer toes until engaged by the sears. Selective ejection is also provided for by the levers in the fore-end.

Assembled on the monobloc system, the Essential differs from other 680 series guns in that the interior surfaces are left matte black and are not engine-turned.

The bores are hard chromed, and each is threaded for Beretta's Mobilchoke tubes (full, modified and improved cylinder are supplied).

The S686 was pattern tested, with results shown in the accompanying table, and function fired at American trap and hand thrown clays with Federal, Sovereign and Winchester ammunition. There were three failures to eject with the Sovereign ammu-




The safety incorporates the barrel selector; sliding it from left to right exposes two dots, indicating that the upper barrel will fire first. The Essential's trigger is an inertial type.

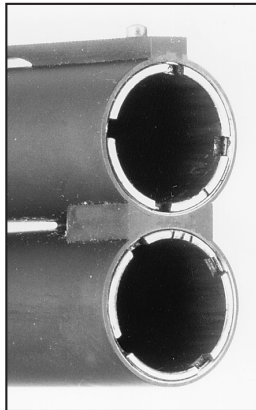


nition among the more than 200 rounds fired.

The Essential lived up to the reputation and handling qualities of its parent line. Though the action was stiff at first, it broke in after steady use.

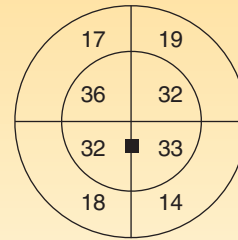
Less experienced shooters did not take to the S686 immediately, thanks to its very lively feel and central balance. They would have liked a little more muzzle-heavy feel. Those whose experience extended to a wider variety of shotguns, especially English-style game guns, found it easier to like. Recoil under heavy 2¾" field loads was a bit unpleasant, a condition exacerbated by the hard plastic buttplate and rather slim buttstock.

For those who want the features of the 686 without the "bells and whistles," the Essential makes a competitive addition. 

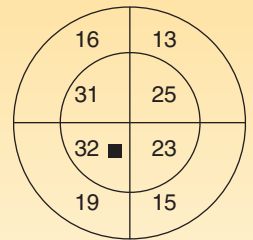


Choke tubes on Beretta's Mobilchoke system are supplied in full, modified and improved cylinder, with proper tube spanner.

## BERETTA S686 ESSENTIAL 12-ga.



Full Tube



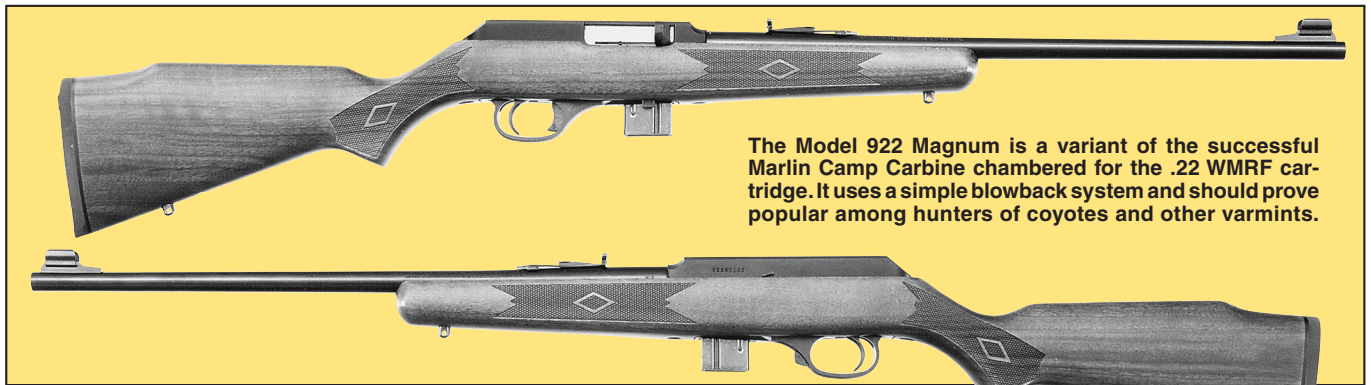
Modified Tube

■ = Point of Hold  
Federal 2¾-1¼-6  
Pellet count—287

Average of 10 patterns at 40 yds.

Total Hits	201 (70%)	Total Hits	174 (61%)
21.2" Inner Circle	133 (46%)	21.2" Inner Circle	111 (39%)
30" Outer Ring	68 (24%)	30" Outer Ring	63 (22%)

# MARLIN MODEL 922 MAGNUM



The Model 922 Magnum is a variant of the successful Marlin Camp Carbine chambered for the .22 WMRF cartridge. It uses a simple blowback system and should prove popular among hunters of coyotes and other varmints.

**S**INCE being introduced in 1959, Winchester's .22 Magnum Rimfire (WMRF) cartridge has been offered by a number of manufacturers in many types of rifle and pistol actions. Semi-automatic rifles, however, seem to have only shown up sporadically and, more often than not, have disappeared quickly.

Growing shooter interest in .22 Mag. semi-auto rifles, though, seems to have prompted a few U.S. makers to announce some new offerings. Among them is the Marlin Model 922 Magnum. Based on the successful Camp Carbine (August 1985, p. 58), the 922 is the firm's first self-loading .22 WMRF rifle.

The action is of the blowback type, with a substantial, square bolt riding in a flat-sided anodized aluminum receiver. The top of the receiver is sandblasted to reduce glare, and is drilled and tapped for scope mounts.

Marlin's familiar Micro-groove rifling is used in the 20½" tapered barrel that is fitted with an adjustable folding semi-buckhorn rear and hooded ramp front sight.

## MARLIN MODEL 922

**MANUFACTURER:** Marlin Firearms Co.,  
Dept. AR, 100 Kenna Dr., N. Haven, CT  
06473

**MECHANISM TYPE:** blowback-operated  
semi-automatic rifle

**CALIBER:** .22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire

**BARREL LENGTH:** 20½"

**OVERALL LENGTH:** 39¼"

**WEIGHT:** 6 lbs. 7 oz.

**TRIGGER:** 5¾ lbs. pull

**SIGHTS:** adjustable folding semi-buckhorn  
rear, hooded ramp front

**STOCK:** American walnut: length of pull,  
13¾"; drop at heel, 1⅞"; drop at comb, 1¼"

**PRICE:** \$362.95

The hefty American walnut Monte Carlo stock is equipped with a rubber butt pad, sling swivel studs and borderless cut checkering at 18 lines per inch on the fore-end and pistol grip. Centrally-located diamond figures accent each checkered area.

A Garand-type steel safety lever is mounted in the forward section of the trigger guard. To engage, push the lever all the way rearward into the trigger guard. Pushing the safety forward until it protrudes from the front of the guard disengages it. A magazine safety prevents firing when the 7-shot detachable box magazine has been removed.

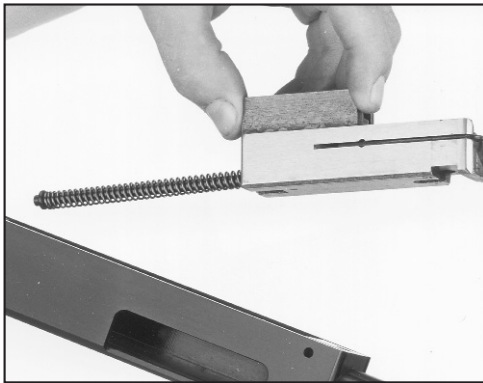
The Model 922 is equipped with an automatic last-shot bolt hold-open device that activates after the last shot, or when the charging handle is pulled fully rearward and

released on the magazine when it is empty.

Although the bolt will not stay open automatically on a loaded magazine, or if the magazine has been removed, it can be manually locked open at any time using the manual bolt hold-open on the left side of the receiver. To lock the bolt, pull the charging handle all the way back and hold it there. Then pull the manual bolt hold-open latch



The trigger group and the bolt stop are removed by driving out the front and rear takedown pins. To remove the bolt, lift it slightly up and to the rear until the charging handle can be removed and then lift it up and out of the rifle's receiver.



rearward and release the charging handle.

Close the bolt from the manual hold-open position by removing the magazine and pushing the bolt hold-open latch forward. Next, retract and release the charging handle.

To load the rifle, begin with the safety engaged and bolt locked open, then remove the magazine by depressing its release on the right side of the magazine housing. Load the magazine as usual and reinsert it into the rifle. Retract the charging handle to disengage the hold-open device, then release it, allowing it to snap shut.

It is important to note that the loading procedure must always be done with the bolt secured open as the magazine will not lock in place if the bolt is closed.

The system differs from Marlin's Camp

Carbine and similar rifles in this respect: it is difficult to carry the 922 with empty chamber, loaded magazine and closed bolt. This can only be accomplished by releasing the bolt hold-open device and, with some dexterity, depressing the top round in the magazine and easing the bolt forward.

To disassemble the Model 922, first make sure the rifle is unloaded. Next, remove the magazine and close the bolt. Turn out the front and rear takedown screws to separate the action from the stock. Using a small punch, remove the front and rear takedown pins, freeing the trigger group and bolt stop from the action. Be sure to note the position of the bolt stop and



The attractive look and feel of the walnut stock so infrequently encountered on today's rimfire rifles will please many shooters.

bolt stop spring, as they easily fall free.

To remove the bolt, use the forefinger to pull the bolt slightly up and to the rear, until the charging handle can be pulled out. With the handle removed, continue to lift the bolt up and out of the receiver. The recoil spring and spring guide can then be lifted from the bolt. No further disassembly is recommended or necessary for routine cleaning or maintenance.



A Garand-type steel safety lever is mounted in the forward section of the trigger guard.

Reassembly is in reverse order. Be sure the takedown pins are returned with their headed ends on the serial number side of the rifle's action.

The Marlin 922 Magnum was fitted with a Burris 6X scope and fired for accuracy with results shown in the accompanying

## ACCURACY RESULTS

.22 WMRF Cartridge	Vel. @15' (f.p.s.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)
Winchester Super-X HP	1637 Avg. 32 Sd	.50	1.77	1.21
CCI Maxi Mag HP	1637 Avg. 59 Sd	.88	1.60	1.17
Federal FMJ	1737 Avg. 33 Sd	.99	2.17	1.35
Average Extreme Spread				1.24
Five Consecutive Five-Shot Groups at 50 Yds. Fired From Sandbags. Abbreviations: Sd (standard deviation), HP (hollow-point), FMJ (full metal-jacketed)				

table. Function-firing was performed with CCI, Winchester, RWS and Federal ammunition. There were no malfunctions of any kind. CCI's Maxi Mag +V was omitted from testing as the manufacturer warns that its use may

cause the gun to malfunction.

The metallic sights are mounted in such a way that the shooter's face must be unnaturally pressed down very hard on the cheek piece to obtain a good sight picture, and even then the sights are partially obscured by the receiver unless the rear sight is set at or above the middle setting on the sight's elevator ramp.

Finding a suitable sight base in our inventory also presented a problem as the Marlin's receiver is flat, and many bases are made for rifles with curved receivers. We found that mounting a blank dovetail rail fitted with tip-off rings worked well.

Some of the smaller groups fired indicate that the gun is capable of relatively good accuracy, and the attractive look and feel of the walnut stock so infrequently encountered on rimfire rifles should please many potential customers.

The Marlin 922 should prove useful for those wanting quick follow-up shot capabilities for activities such as calling coyotes or plinking with a cartridge offering more punch than a .22 Long Rifle without the expense of center-fire ammunition.

